

NCTL Newsletter - Spring '24, No. 1

From the Jane B. Nord Center for Teaching + Learning

Starting a New Semester



A new semester always comes with articles about how to start your courses in ways that foster belonging and drive learning. I was excited to see one of this year's featured articles is written by James M. Lang, the author of [Small Teaching](#) and [Distractions: Why Students Can't Focus and What You Can Do About It](#). In this advice guide, [How to Teach a Good First Day of Class](#), Lang shares stories of first day practices from faculty in different fields and offers topics for consideration. He concludes the article with advice for sustaining the energy and intentions of a good beginning. Even if you have held your first day of class, Lang's advice can help in setting the tone for a new unit or strengthening community in your classroom on an ongoing basis.

One way to support positive classroom experiences is to utilize [clear and inclusive language](#) in course policies and assignments. Simple tweaks, such as shifting from cold language (late work is penalized) to warm language (late work is still eligible for partial credit) can help foster motivation and alleviate some anxiety. In addition, clarifying ambiguous directives (e.g., "stay engaged," "work hard") and providing examples of successful work can help students better achieve expectations. Many of our faculty have great examples of these practices in their syllabi and other course materials. Check out our growing repository of examples in the Canvas course, "Resources for the Cleveland Institute of Art" (found by searching Canvas Commons - see screenshot below). Not sure what Canvas Commons is? [Find out more!](#)



Search

7 results

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Resources for the Cleveland Institute of Art
Undergraduate

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This Canvas course has additional supportive modules, including student-facing language and a learning module on student development theory. The student-facing language module includes resources that you can edit and utilize with students, such as a page on **how to handle challenge** and a presentation **explaining our attendance policy**. You can easily import these into your own Canvas courses. If you have other resources you would like to share or requests for certain topics, please email keweaver@cia.edu.

Spring Programming at CIA



This semester, we will continue the popular offering of **Sharing Practices**, an informal session where 1-2 faculty share information on their current practices. These sessions are meant to spark discussion, encourage creative thinking about teaching, and offer support to one another. Lunch is provided. ***Our first session of the Spring semester is on AI practices***, and will be led by Jimmy Kuhnele (SEM) and Shayna Sharpe (LA). This session is scheduled for Monday, February 26, 11-12. [Register here](#). If you are interested in leading a future sharing sessions practice, please email keweaver@cia.edu.

TRI Conversations: These conversations are meant to help us enact our institutional values of transparency, responsibility, and inclusion. Sessions include facilitated dialogue around poignant and provocative questions. All from the CIA community are welcome to attend. We will have a session in February on ableism, and an April session on rationales that support bias. Registration information and additional details will be sent via email and posted on our [events page](#).

Canvas: We have reached our first anniversary of implementing Canvas as our institutional learning management system (LMS). Over the last year I have seen a lot of creative and effective uses of Canvas, and I have received many questions about grading, assignment setup, and organization. While we have [great training sessions and materials](#) available, many of us would benefit from additional training, including opportunities to hear what other faculty are doing for their classes. If you are interested in Canvas sessions, [please fill out this short survey](#) to provide input on topics of interest and format preference.

Wanted: Feedback on additional programming. Your input in this [short survey](#) will help the Nord Center offer programming that is timely and accessible. The survey asks about topics of interest and format preferences.

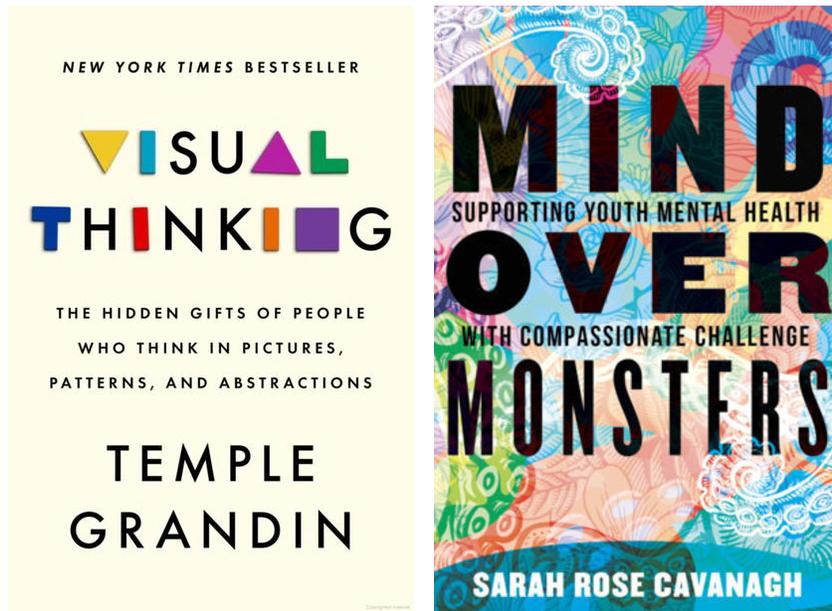
Upcoming Free Webinars



- **How to connect with students meaningfully while maintaining boundaries** (Wednesday, January 31, 11-12). "We live and teach in an environment that we are told is increasingly depersonalized, decentralized, and mediated by technology. At the same time, we are encouraged to get to know our students, understand their diverse life experiences, backgrounds, and learning styles as a way to facilitate their learning and development and to aid in retention and engagement. Privacy laws, problems such as stalking or harassment, and our increased awareness of personal problems that students experience work against this attempt to get to know them and opens us up to areas and issues with which we are not always equipped to deal. In addition, we are teaching larger classes where individual contact with students is even harder to achieve. With all these competing demands and pressures, how do we connect meaningfully but prudently with our students as people? This session offers practical advice, activities and strategies that have been tested in the classroom and have facilitated achieving our desire to communicate meaningfully and influence lives without crossing boundaries or being invasive."
- **Supporting your child's health as they transition to college** (Thursday, January 25, 7-8:30 PM). This online event is [helpful for educators and caregivers](#) to learn how best to support students as they transition to college. "Attendees will learn what is known about

who contemporary U.S. college students are, and the rates with which they are experiencing mental health difficulties in this post-pandemic era. They will also learn what educators, caregivers, and students can expect during their first semester of college and what they and other people can do to support students academically, socially, and psychologically. The workshop will be taught by Dr. Kimberly Arditte Hall of Framingham State University."

Reading Groups Continue This Spring



The book choices for this academic year are helping us explore issues of mental wellness and neurodiversity. If you want to join in the conversation during Spring semester, please email Kari (keweaver@cia.edu).

The first book, **Visual Thinking: The hidden gifts of people who think in pictures, patterns, and abstractions** (2022) is written by Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin has authored several books illuminating her own experiences as a person with autism and investigating the ever-expanding research on autism and differences in cognition. In this book, Dr. Grandin's focus on visual thinkers "makes us understand how a world increasingly geared to the verbal tends to sideline visual thinkers, screening them out at school and passing over them in the workplace. Rather than continuing to waste their singular gifts, driving a collective loss in productivity and innovation, Grandin proposes new approaches to educating, parenting, employing, and collaborating with visual thinkers." **The Gund Library has provided electronic copies of this book.**

The second book, **Mind over monsters: Supporting youth mental health with compassionate challenge** (2023) is written by psychologist and professor Sarah Rose Cavanagh. Increases in anxiety and depression prompted Dr. Cavanagh to offer a "an invigorating tour of pedagogical, neuroscientific, and psychological research on mental health" that seeks solutions through interviews with "a roster of experts across the country who are dedicating their lives to working with young people to help them actualize their goals, and highlights voices of college students from a range of diverse backgrounds. **The Gund Library has provided electronic copies of this book.**

---Please contact keweaver@cia.edu if you would like to receive a personal copy of either of these books.---



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The Cleveland Institute of Art is an accredited, independent college of art and design committed to nurturing the intellectual, artistic and professional development of students in 13 undergraduate majors. CIA extends its programs to the public through exhibitions, lectures, continuing education and the CIA Cinematheque, a nationally acclaimed art and independent film program.

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